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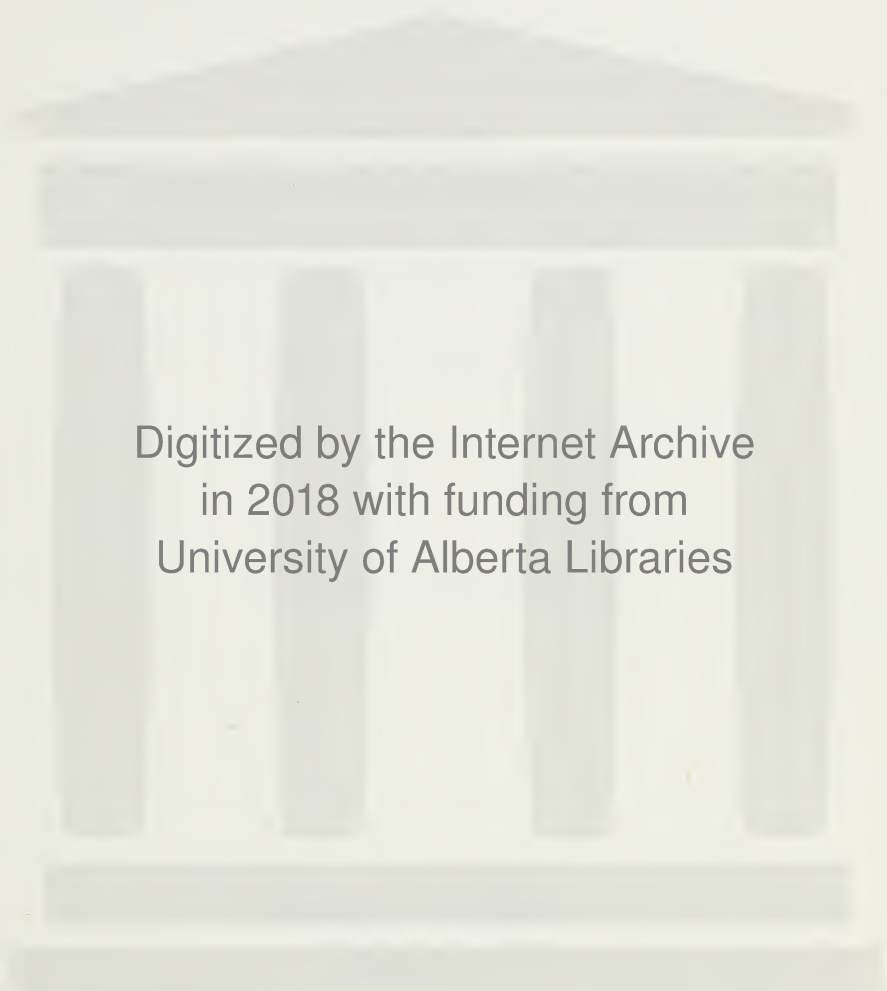
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THE FUNCTIONS OF THE TEMPLE

A Dissertation

submitted to the B.D. Committee of the  
Senate of the University of Alberta  
in candidacy for the degree of  
Bachelor of Divinity

by

JOHN THOMAS WYLIE, B.A.

University of Alberta

April 1952







THE FUNCTIONS OF THE TEMPLE

by

JOHN THOMAS WYLIE, B.A.

St. Stephen's College  
University of Alberta

April 1952





## DEDICATION

To my wife Lois, whose constant encouragement and inspiration have made possible all of my humble achievements; and to my daughter Susan, who symbolizes the ever present joy in my chosen vocation.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Acknowledgment is gratefully made to Rev. Dr. L. E. Toombs for the invaluable assistance he has given both in the composition of this thesis and in all of my Old Testament studies; and to my friend and fellow student, Vern Wishart for help rendered in fruitful discussions.





## PREFACE

The functions of the Temple have not been set forth in any great detail by recognized Biblical scholars. As a result, the almost exclusive sources, used in this thesis, are texts of Old Testament Scripture. The authorized and revised versions, as well as the Hebrew text, have been used. The quotations made have been taken mainly from the authorized version. In such cases as the others are employed, they will be referred to as RV and MT, respectively.

The Hebrew text used is R. Kittle's Biblica Hebraica, Leipzig, 1906; 3rd edition (giving Ben Asher's text edited by P. Kahle) edited by A. Alt and O. Eissfeldt. Stuttgart, 1929-1937.

The chronology followed is that of W.F. Albright (The Biblical Period).



## INTRODUCTION

Ezekiel saw a wheel a rolling,  
Way up in the middle of the air.  
A wheel within a wheel a rolling,  
Way up in the middle of the air.  
And the big wheel ran by faith  
And the little wheel ran by the  
    grace of God.

This song is a favorite of campers, old and young. You can hear it shouted by noisy youngsters from the mess hall. You can thrill to its harmony from a chorus gathered around a glowing camp fire.

This exegesis of Ezekiel's vision symbolizes God's control of the universe. The larger wheel can turn only when the smaller, inner wheel, is in motion. The hub turns the rim. Israelites sought the grace of God in the Temple at Jerusalem. From the time of Abraham, their belief, their faith in one God, was always on the circumference of their lives, individually and collectively. They linked themselves with God in particular ways. The spokes ran from the rim to the hub as sacred objects, sacrifice and offering, shrines, the priesthood, the Law and the Temple ritual. All of their religious practices, vestigial and active, are brought together in the Temple building and its worship. The functions of the Temple reveal a development, from earliest times, in the strivings of the Children of Israel to worship God more perfectly. The development commences with a non moral conception of the holiness of God. It culminates in the moral holiness of clean hands and a pure heart. This is regarded as essen-



tial in approaching God. It is also the characteristic idea of worship in the Old Testament.

The Temple, then, became the hub, the central point of worship. Here the glory of the Lord was sought. From here, it was hoped, the grace of God would pour forth. The divine power would generate dedicated lives into great sources of righteousness and service. At the Temple, the altar of the universe, men might approach God, seek the very means of forgiveness and renewed power for their lives.





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## CHAPTER I

### THE TEMPLE AS THE CENTER OF DIVINE WORSHIP

#### 1. The Position Of Sanctuaries

From primitive times, in Semitic lands, sanctuaries were used to mark holy places. A holy character was seen as belonging to such things as springs, rocks, trees and heights. These were thought to be the favorite haunts of deities. To such places were attached an altar, a sacred stone pillar, a sacred tree or pole and some symbol of deity. The Hebrews, when they settled in the Promised Land, came to think of Yahweh as being in or near such holy places. Many of these had been seats of worship for Canaanite deities. Holy places were now regarded as sites where Yahweh had specially manifested Himself (Gen. 28: 11f) or recorded<sup>1</sup> His name (Ex. 20: 24). It appears to have been a custom of the ancient Semites to look upon hilltops as especially suitable locations for worship. Thus, it was quite natural for the Israelites to adopt the sanctuaries in the high places of the Canaanites. They still retained the sacred objects, such as sacred pillars or stones (Gen. 28: 18). However, at the beginning of their settlement in Canaan, these numerous sanctuaries, for the most part, were devoted to the worship of Yahweh.

Each sanctuary had an altar so that appropriate sacrifices could be offered to Yahweh (I Sam. 9: 12). This denotes the close association that they had with the worship of their God. The idea developed that certain of these sanctuaries were established by Yahweh, Himself

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. "cause My name to be remembered".



(Ex. 15: 17). The dedication of Bethel by Jacob shows that a holy place was actually the spot where divine direction was received (Gen. 28: 10ff). When Jacob awoke from his inspiring dream, he "took the stone that he had for his pillow, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it." Jacob anointed this pillar to be "God's house" (RV).<sup>2</sup>

It can be seen that some sanctuaries were regarded as symbols of Yahweh's activity. In Judges 6: 24 the name given to the altar is "Jehovah - shalom." This means Yahweh is peace (MT). This is an allusion to the words of Yahweh contained in verse 23, "Peace be unto thee." This passage relates the account of Gideon's brilliant victory over the Midianites. Gideon was called by Yahweh to lead his people to freedom from the control of the conquering Midianites. Gideon asked for a sign. He prepared sacrifices and laid them upon a rock. These were consumed by fire when an angel of the Lord touched the rock. Gideon perceived this to be the activity of Yahweh, Himself, and constructed an altar where this manifestation had appeared. Thus Gideon hallowed the place where he had received assurance of support in carrying out Yahweh's instructions. The story of his success is a well known one. After he had gained victory over the Midianites, Gideon could fully realize the significance of the words spoken by the God of Israel.

The sanctuary at Shiloh (I Sam. 1:3), the chief shrine of Israel in the last days of the Judges, illustrates the sacredness that was attached to ancient holy places. The location of this shrine is explicitly given (Judg. 21:19) as being "on the north side of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Bethel to Shechem, and on

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<sup>2</sup> Heb. "Beth-el".



the south of Lebonah." It has been identified with the modern Seilun. We learn, from both the above passages in I Samuel and Judges that a yearly feast was held at Shiloh. Elkanah, the husband of Hannah, went there to worship and to offer sacrifices unto Yahweh. The tribe of Benjamin went to the festival at Shiloh to secure wives for themselves. Dancing seems to have been a customary activity at this annual festival, for the Benjamites were told to catch wives for themselves from the daughters of Shiloh, as they danced.

From the sanctuary at Shiloh, we know that a priesthood was associated with these shrines. Hannah, true to her vow (I Sam. 1:11), took Samuel, her first-born son, to this holy place. Here she dedicated him to the service of Yahweh under Eli, the high priest. Eli was an old man and seems to have held his priestly position for a long time. There are no accounts of his investiture into the priesthood nor of his early life.

The importance of Shiloh at this time may be seen from the fact that it housed the Ark of the Covenant. When Joshua moved his headquarters from Gilgal to Shiloh (Josh. 18:1ff.), he brought the Tabernacle and the Ark with him<sup>3</sup>. In the time of Eli and Samuel, the Tabernacle was replaced by a permanent building. In I Samuel 1:9 it is called a temple. We have no information regarding the size of this "house of the Lord." The Ark was considered to be a sign of Yahweh's presence. Resting in the sanctuary at Shiloh, it would heighten the sacredness of this holy place. It is sufficient to note here that the Ark was taken into battle against the Philistines. The enemy was victorious and captured Israel's sacred Ark. It is also probable, at this

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<sup>3</sup> The full significance of the Ark will be discussed in Chapter III, Section 2.





time, that the sanctuary at Shiloh was destroyed by the Philistines.

The religion of Israel became a covenant religion at Mount Sinai. Moses made a national theism by welding together the earlier religious ideas of the nomadic Hebrews. Yahweh was to be the God of the Israelites and they were to be His people. The Covenant was the seal of the proposition. But when the Children of Israel settled in Canaan they forgot that this was a royal covenant. They made it an arbitrary agreement, taking licence when they should have given obedience. In Canaan they adopted a cult religion similar to Baal worship. It did not take long for the most of them to conform to the pagan worship of the Baals. Instead of raising the cult religion to the standards of the covenant, they succumbed to its superstitions, materialism and idolatry. It was the prophet Amos who shattered this conception of religion as cult religion. This fearless eighth century prophet made the religion of Israel supremely ethical.

Amos' keen insight of the ethical conception of religion remained a theory for him. He had no political power to invoke reform. But not long after he emerged from the wilderness of Tekoa, reforms did take place. Steps toward centralizing the worship were made. In this action lay the hope that Israel's religion would become ethical in content and practice. In II Kings 18:1ff, we read that King Hezekiah of Judah (c. 715-687) "removed the high places and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the sacred poles" (RV). This king was interested in strengthening and reforming the nation. He not only succeeded in purifying the forms of worship, but he made Jerusalem the national religious center. During his reign idolatrous practices were made impossible. However, it





was not until the reign of King Josiah (c. 640-609) that all shrines outside of the Holy City were abolished. While the Temple walls were being repaired, some workmen found a copy of the Law, as contained in the Book of Deuteronomy. Josiah recognized this book as the ideal national constitution of Israel and his reforms were based on it. He centralized all the worship in the land in the Temple at Jerusalem. Josiah's premature death in a battle against the Egyptians, brought an end to his reforms. But the ideal of the prophets had been given national recognition. The moral code of Deuteronomy had set forth the ethical conceptions of the great prophets. Thus Josiah had given his religious and cultic reforms a prophetic basis. The Temple, the sanctuary of the priest, received prophetic guidance. The one God of Israel was now royally proclaimed. The establishment of one sanctuary confirmed the belief in one God.

The ever narrowing circle of worshipping Yahweh, finally was drawn into the focal point. The Children of Israel were a God-fearing people. It is true that their belief in one God sometimes wandered to the worship of pagan deities, but the true servants of Yahweh remained loyal. These faithful few, such as Abraham, Moses, the devoted prophets, the Kings David, Hezekiah and Josiah, drew in the circle. The pagan practices were abolished. The shrines, which had become places of desecration, were removed. The day when the rebuilt Temple became the altar of the Temple universal, was not far off.



## 2. Zion Is The Only Center Of True Worship

"Moreover he refused the tabernacle of Joseph<sup>4</sup>, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim: But chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved" (Ps. 78:67f). These verses contain an account of the choice of Zion. Here and elsewhere (Ps. 87:1f; Is. 14:32), it is shown that this was considered to be a divine selection. Yahweh had chosen Zion as the place where His sanctuary should be built. The tribe of Ephraim had formerly established Yahweh's shrine at Shiloh. If this had not been actually destroyed by the Philistines, at least it was no longer the religious center of the nation. The tribe of Judah had remained true to the house of David and therefore was considered to be chosen by Yahweh for a special purpose. Jerusalem lay within the kingdom of Judah and had a special association with Zion. Zion is identified as a mountain here. It is also referred to as Jerusalem itself. It seems then, that Zion was the site of the Holy City, including the mountainous region in which it was situated. Modern tradition locates Mount Zion as the south west hill of the range around Jerusalem. It is on this site that the Temple and citadel were built. However, Zion's significance was that its site was believed to have been consecrated by Yahweh (Ps. 2:6; 43:3; 48:1).

In II Chronicles 3:1 we read that "Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem in mount Moriah". Moriah is described as the place where Abraham prepared Isaac for sacrifice (Gen. 22:2). This region had a specially sacred tradition. In the early writings of Scripture, Zion is the name given to the nation's religious center. Moriah was the name given

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<sup>4</sup> "Joseph" is frequently used to denote the combined tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh or the Northern Kingdom of Judah as a whole (Gen. 49:22ff; Deut. 33:13ff; Josh. 16:1,4; I Kings 11:28).





later to show a possible association with Abraham. The Books of Chronicles are known to be late writings and they support this speculation. What is significant is that Zion was selected to be the site of the Temple.

In the days of Moses, Mount Sinai had been thought of as the dwelling place of Yahweh. Now Zion is His special abode (Ps. 50:2; Is. 2:2f; 24:23). It became recognized as such from the time that the Ark of the Covenant was moved to the Temple at Jerusalem<sup>5</sup>. It was from Zion that Yahweh would henceforth judge His people. Psalm 50 presents a solemn vision of judgment. In earlier days Yahweh came forth from Mount Sinai, in the midst of storm and lightning, to promulgate the law. Here He is represented as appearing from Zion, surrounded by these symbols of His majesty, to continue the enforcement of His commands. The name which God is given represents certain aspects of His divine nature. E<sup>l</sup>ohim is His name as the God of nature and creation. Yahweh is used to signify that He is the God of the covenant and of grace. "The mighty God, even Yahweh" (MT) came to dwell in Zion. He came to enforce His Law. More important, however, is the assurance that here He may be found.

Yahweh is given the title 'Most High' several times in the Psalter (Ps. 7:17; 9:11; 18:13). In Psalm 7, Yahweh is given this name because it characterizes His self revelation as the supreme governor of the world. In this Psalm it is shown that Yahweh executes judgment unceasingly on the wicked. The conclusion is an ascription of praise to Him for His manifestation of His righteousness. Although this title is not used by the prophets, it does appear in the Book of Deuteronomy (32:8). Here in the Song of Moses it alludes to Yahweh's irreproachable impartiality in partitioning the earth

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<sup>5</sup> A full account of the restoration of the Ark appears on Pages 33-34.



among the nations. The Most High God will dwell in Zion, executing judgment as conceived by the great prophets.

Isaiah of Jerusalem prophecied an impending doom in Chapter 28 of his book. The full might of Assyria threatened to engulf all of the nations. Meanwhile the royal court of Judah spent its time in drunken revelry. As a statesman, Isaiah warned the officials of their folly. As a prophet, he sounds the only note of hope. "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a sure foundation" (v.16). Yahweh has established His Temple in Zion. Isaiah considered the Temple to be inviolate. Its existence was the assurance of divine help. Zion, Yahweh's chosen site, was the very foundation of the national hope.

Mountains in general, as the most solid part of the earth, were considered by the Israelites to be the symbol of all that was immovable and unchangeable (Ps. 93:1; Is. 54:10). In both of these references, these characteristics of Yahweh are noted. In Psalm 93 the mountains symbolize Yahweh's majesty and power. In the passage from Isaiah, they symbolize both Yahweh's irrevocable judgment and His mercy. Mountains were the most assuring symbol of security to the Israelites. In Psalm 125 divine trust is said to be nurtured by Mount Zion, "they that trust in Yahweh shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed" (v.1 MT). Zion, then, is a manifestation of the trust that the Israelites place in their God.

Until serious study is made of the choice of Zion, its full significance cannot be realized. It can be seen that in this high place the Israelites experienced many divine manifestations. Zion embodies many of the elements contained in true worship. The prophet and psalmist proclaim Zion to be a place which has been divinely chosen. When the Ark of the Covenant came to rest in Jerusalem, Zion was recognized as the abode of Yahweh.





Mount Sinai had been abandoned by Yahweh and Zion now became the place of His judgment. Now that Yahweh dwelt in Zion it became the foundation of national hope. Zion was the nation's symbol of security that was placed in Yahweh.

### 3. The Selection Of Jerusalem

There is no information in the Old Testament or historical books concerning the origin of the city of Jerusalem. It is recorded as "Urusalim" in the Tell-el-Amarna tablets (1400 B.C.). In this letter, the king appeals to Pharaoh Amenhotep IV for help against certain invaders known as the Habiri. The following account is contained in the Book of Ezekiel, "Thus saith the Lord God unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; they father was an Amorite, and thy mother a Hittite" (16:3). Jerusalem, it is known, was a royal city of the Canaanites. A reference in Judges 19:10ff, reveals that it was held by the Canaanitic tribe of the Jebusites. They called the city Jebus. When David captured this city (II Sam. 5:6ff), it was already known as Jerusalem. Jeremiah gives the meaning of the name, but its origin is not indicated. Jeremiah 33:16b reads, "and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness." Jerusalem was of national importance from earliest times. This connotation of its name suited its favored destiny.

The account of the capture of Jerusalem appears in II Samuel 5:6-10 and I Chronicles 11:4-9. The forces of David had little difficulty in overcoming the Jebusites. After its capture, Jerusalem was officially known as the "City of David." The seizure of Jerusalem and the employment of it as the nation's capital, gives an illustration of David's political genius. David was first recognized as king of southern Israel. Later the northern



tribes invited him to become monarch of all Israel. Political instability would have continued to plague David, as it did Saul, had he relied upon the uncertain support of the tribes. David's solution was to choose this city, which was outside of the Israelite tribal system, to be his capital. Jerusalem had never before been the property of Israel. Its strategic position is seen from its location on the very borders of the re-united halves of his kingdom. Thus David could establish his court according to his own design. He was not forced to solicit tribal support through complimentary positions. David's wisdom as a soldier is shown in his selection of Jerusalem. Nestled in Zion, the city would be attacked on its weakest side, from the south. David had strong fortifications constructed to defend this approach. So, for practical military and political purposes, Jerusalem became the nation's center.

From the pages of Scripture it can be seen that Jerusalem was also regarded as the heart of Israel because it was chosen by Yahweh. The Book of Deuteronomy, which codifies the prophetic ideals, indicates this. The people are urged, in obedience to Yahweh's statutes, to destroy all of the rural sanctuaries (Deut. 12:1ff). The only one that is to remain is the one that Yahweh chooses. The location will be the one He has selected above any habitation of all the tribes. This of course is Jerusalem. The Psalmist proclaimed Jerusalem as being divinely chosen (Ps. 114:2). Solomon, in his prayer of dedication (I Kings 8:44, 48), certifies this as a generally accepted belief. David showed gifted insight in his strategical selection of Jerusalem as his capital. But the Israelites regarded its special choice as a divinely ordained act of Yahweh. It had become the national center of worship. It was the Holy City.





When David's armies had completely broken the power of the Philistines, it was possible for Israel to regain possession of the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark was transferred from Kiriath-jearim to the City of David (II Sam. 6:1ff; I Chron. 15:1ff). The Tabernacle, in which it was now housed, was the tent, used in the time of Moses. The possession of this ancient palladium of the tribes of Israel was of great religious significance. It gained pre-eminence for the sanctuary at Jerusalem over all other sanctuaries in the land. As has been noted, in due time, the Deuteronomic reforms of Josiah made it the exclusive center of worship. After David had restored the Ark, his central government was securely established. The next fifteen years of his reign were marked by peace and prosperity. It is interesting to note that there was prosperity wherever the Ark rested. When it was being transported to Jerusalem, David left it in the house of Obed-edom, the Gittite, for three months (II Sam. 6:11). While it was there "the Lord blessed Obed-edom, and all his household." This attribute of the Ark is proclaimed in later days by Zechariah (1:16f). David was assuring the success of his reign by acknowledging the power which was invested in this symbol of the divine presence.

As soon as the Ark was brought to rest in Jerusalem, David had offerings prepared for its reception (II Sam. 6:17; I Chron. 16:1f). The construction of the altar is not specifically described in these passages. The definite mention of it does not occur until later in the Book of I Chronicles (16:40). However, our account does tell us that sacrifices were offered. This was the first step in establishing a right relationship with Yahweh. This procedure is borne out in later times. When the Jewish refugees returned from their exile in Babylon, they were anxious to restore the Temple. Before they commenced work on their cherished sanctuary, they established this



proper relationship with their God. In order to renew worship at Jerusalem, they constructed an altar and presented offerings to Yahweh (Ezra 3:1-6). It was of utmost importance to make supplication to Yahweh and to seek His divine aid.

The primary reason for selecting Jerusalem as the nation's capital was a matter of political expediency. But as the place of asylum for the Ark of the Covenant, it became confirmed as the national religious center. Jerusalem was Yahweh's chosen Holy City.

#### 4. The Universal Significance Of The Temple

The Book of Leviticus, while a late compilation, contains many ancient laws. The Children of Israel integrated these laws with their religious practices. These show that Yahweh was not considered to be worshipped exclusively by the Israelites. Provisions were made for the proselytes or aliens who dwelt in Israel. It is true that they were expected to come within the jurisdiction of Hebrew law, but special recognition was given to them. If they offered a burnt offering or made any sacrifice at the doorway of the tent of meeting, they would receive Yahweh's blessing (Lev. 17:8f). Yahweh was the sole object of worship for both the Israelite and the sojourner. In these early times Yahweh was held to be supreme above all other gods. The beginnings of the universal conception of God are seen in the extension of His power over these proselytes. When the Israelites settled in Canaan, Yahweh became the arbitrator of all justice. Yet, it was not until the time of the great prophets that He was proclaimed as the judge of all mankind.

Solomon's Prayer of Dedication (I Kings 8:22-53) develops the idea of the universal significance of the Temple. Before this is shown, the





composition of this prayer must be discussed. The eighth chapter of I Kings contains three orations of Solomon: his address to the people, verses 15-21; his Prayer of Dedication, 22-53; and the Benediction, 54-61. These passages reveal numerous coincidences in style with the Book of Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic parts of the Book of Joshua. All these writings are the work of the Deuteronomic school, which was formed after the reform of Josiah in 621. These additions in I Kings comprise an interpretation of a historical situation in the form of speeches which were supposed to have been delivered by the leading personage of the story. This was a common practice of Deuteronomic historians. The compiler of I and II Kings gives his own view of the supreme significance of the building of Solomon's Temple. It has thus been established by Biblical scholars that Solomon did not actually deliver any of these speeches. A further explanation is revealed in the religious intention of these writers. They had little interest in political affairs. The important reigns of Omri and Jeroboam II are dismissed with a few meagre notices. Events which have an ecclesiastical character are described at great length. Always the standard adhered to is the Book of Deuteronomy. The writer's purpose is to show how the ideas which are inculcated in Deuteronomy. The writer's purpose is to show how the ideas which are inculcated in Deuteronomy have been those which molded the destinies of the nation throughout its past history. Two of these ideas have been presented as the insistence of maintaining purity of worship and the restriction of sacrificial worship to the central sanctuary at Jerusalem. Another ideal is to uphold the right of Yahweh to demand the whole-hearted allegiance and worship of His chosen people Israel (I Kings 2:2-4). With these ideas in mind the writer composes a prayer of dedication for Solomon that would uphold the Deuteronomic ideal.



From Solomon's prayer it is intended that the Temple should be regarded as "a house of prayer for all people" (cf. Is. 56:7). A petition first is made to Yahweh to listen to the prayers of His people, whether they be in the Temple or offer their prayers toward it (v.30). Next, the non-Israelite, the stranger, is assured that if he prays towards the Temple, Yahweh will listen (v.41). Yahweh was considered to be the God of all nations by the prophets. When the stranger stretches out his arms in supplication, all the peoples of the earth will come to know Yahweh's name (v.43).

Yahweh's house was little more than a shrine to the infamous Solomon. This ambitious monarch denied the supremacy of Israel's God when he provided shrines for the pagan gods of his foreign wives. His expedient marriages guarded his agreements with other nations. But the Temple was established in Jerusalem. Isaiah of Babylon proclaimed its importance in keeping with the prophetic ideal, "for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people" (Is. 56:7b). The Deuteronomic writers intended to show that from the time that the Temple was dedicated, Yahweh's presence, symbolized by the Ark, did actually make it a house of prayer for all people. Thus the Children of Israel could turn toward it in prayer when they were in exile in Babylon. Thus all men could echo the Psalmist's prayer "from the end of the earth will I cry unto thee" (Ps. 61:2).



## CHAPTER II

### THE TEMPLE AS AN INDICATION OF SUBLIME WORSHIP

#### 1. Reasons Why David Could Not Build The Temple

In the Book of I Chronicles, we read that David was personally unfit to build the Temple (22:8; 28:2). In many cases, the events which occur in the books of the Chronicler are a restatement of their occurrence in the historic books of I and II Kings<sup>6</sup>. It is only in I Chronicles that this first reason for David's inability to build the Temple is found. The writer of this book makes a special case of David's position. Here David's kingdom is glorified. Its wealth and power are exaggerated beyond the reach of even David's own imagination. This is done in keeping with the Chronicler's purpose of writing the first apology of Judaism. He sets down a polemic against the claims of the Samaritans, who possessed the Law of Moses and had a rival temple at Mount Gerizim. It is also written against the pretensions of the Gentiles of Europe and Asia. The Chronicler set out to prove that the religion of Jerusalem was the only true one. Along with this he wants to show that the Temple was the religious center of mankind. He traces the sacred institutions of Judaism back to Moses and Aaron, or, when that was impossible, to David. Thus the Golden Era in Israel's history is glorified. It is shown how David organized the work of the sacred functionaries and prepared for the building of the Temple. David's renowned accomplishments are recorded almost without blemish. In spite of this, the Chronicler records David's unworthiness for being able to undertake the actual construc-

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<sup>6</sup> e.g., Solomon's Prayer of Dedication, I Kings 8:22-53; II Chron. 6:12-42.





tion of the Temple. "But the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars; thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight" (22:8). This reason seems unjustified in view of the fact that the Philistines had to be defeated in order to secure Israel's freedom. Nevertheless, the Chronicler considers this monarch, who had carried out such extensive warfare, to be unfit to establish Yahweh's sacred sanctuary.

The reason given for David's prevention of building the Temple in I Kings 5:3, is that he was hindered by incessant wars. It is known that David extended the boundaries of the kingdom of Israel farther than they had ever been. They were widened as far as central Syria in the northwest and the Euphrates Valley in the northeast. He won brilliant victories over the Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites, Arameans and Philistines. Also within Israel proper, David had to show great skill and diplomacy in retaining order among the tribes. In the time of Saul, their support was not reliable. David did not want his kingdom to be weakened by internal strife. The vigilance which David was forced to keep was lessened in the last years of his reign. However, Israel was not to have one sanctuary until it had received complete rest from its enemies. This is also the reason given in the Deuteronomic code (Deut. 12:9f). The Hebrew historians felt justified in reserving this appointed time for the reign of Solomon.

The third reason given, in forbidding David to build the Temple, is that the worship of Yahweh had not completely emerged from its earlier nomadic ideal (II Sam. 7). This chapter intends to show the divine guarantee of the permanence of David's dynasty. It also reveals how the prophet Nathan advised David against constructing a permanent house for Yahweh's





presence. This fearless servant is divinely informed that Israel's God still prefers to have a tent for His dwelling place. The Ark of the Covenant had usually been kept in a tent since the days of Moses. This temporary residence was a constant reminder that Yahweh could not be confined to any permanent location. Although Yahweh had chosen Zion, the Israelites still required a period of continuous peace before they could give their devoted attention to the worship of Yahweh. So until their God chose the place where His name should dwell (Deut. 12:11), the preceding period, dating from the Exodus, was considered to be a transitional one. This is borne out in Solomon's address to the people (I Kings 8:15f), which precedes his prayer of dedication.

On the surface, the reasons for preventing David from building the Temple are far from satisfactory. David is held in the highest esteem, "my servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with his whole heart" (I Kings 14:8). This is an estimate given by one of the writers of the Deuteronomic school. The Psalmists proclaim the gracious mercy of Yahweh for the blessings bestowed upon David (Ps. 18:50; 78:70; 89:3, 20). It seems evident that the Israelite historians found it most difficult to explain David's failure to build. Israel's national hero and religious saviour would have been their choice as the architect of the house of God. Yet the reasons given display a characteristic Hebrew genius. These set forth the high moral and religious requirements necessary for sublime worship. Moral integrity is stressed by the prophetic reformers. Consecrated members of the priesthood insisted that the ceremonial rites be performed punctiliously. These moral and ritualistic requirements were closely



allied with the political and national conditions. It was desirable that there be a lasting period of peace. Added to this was a necessary alteration in the minds of the worshippers. The Israelites had traditionally held the nomadic ideal of Yahweh's mobility. He had gone before them in time of war and settlement. The Ark had been housed in a tent. A transition was needed to change this ideal so that Yahweh would be naturally thought of as dwelling in a fixed abode in Zion.

## 2. Decorative Symbols Used In The Temple

It was a combination of the prophetic and priestly ideals that were symbolized in the construction of the Temple. The evolution of these ideals is displayed figuratively in the designs wrought on the pillars, doors and walls of the Temple. The "inner court of the house of the Lord" (I Kings 7:12) was marked off by a low fence of three rows of hewn stones and a row of cedar beams. Standing at the head of the platform steps and flanking the porch entrance were two pillars of brass. The one on the right was named Jachin and that on the left was called Boaz (I Kings 7:21). It is not known whether these names were inscribed in some way on the pillars. They may have been key words in some kind of mottoes, but their actual meaning remains a mystery. Ezekiel also includes these two pillars in his plans for the Temple (40:49).

The use of pillars in sanctuaries evolved from stone worship. Primitive Semitic people believed that the whole world of earth, water, air and sky was animated. Every part or feature of the world was thought to be the abode of life in one form or another. Thus rocks, from which echoes and



other mysterious sounds were heard, from which living water sprang or within whose recesses it was stored, were thought to be animated by a diety. Once rocks and stones were regarded as sacred objects, they became factors in subsequent religious tradition. So the stones and pillars which were used in the Temple were regarded to be sacred objects. They were used as symbols of Yahweh's presence.

The twin pillars, Jachin and Boaz, were made of brass or a copper alloy. It is likely that each pillar consisted of cylindrical cast copper plates which had been slipped over a built-up cedar post<sup>7</sup>. This would be in accordance with such methods that are known to be within the capacity of skilled workmen in the time of Solomon. The chapiters, or upper part of the columns, consisted of a bowl member, a leaf member and the pomegranates. The bowl member may have been a vessel in which incense was burned. Whatever significance the pomegranates and leaves had is now not known.

Cherubim were represented in the carved woodwork of the doors and walls of the Temple (I Kings 6:29, 32, 35). Although no precise shape is assigned to cherubim, they are described as composite creatures. They have the wings of birds and the bodies of terrestrial animals. They symbolize the manifold forces of nature, combining the strength of the earth with the swiftness of the wind. They are described alike in prophetic vision and in sacred art as attending upon Yahweh and assisting to enhance the glory of His manifested presence<sup>8</sup>. These were the only living creatures that were portrayed in the Tabernacle and the Temple. This, apparently, was done without any violence

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<sup>7</sup> It is quite possible that these pillars allude to tree worship. In this case the cedar post would represent the tree and the cylindrical plates the bark.

<sup>8</sup> cf. Gen. 3:24; II Sam. 22:11; Ps. 18:10; 80:1; Is. 37:16.





to the second commandment (Ex. 20:3). Cherubim, then, were regarded only as ministers of the Most High. They occupied a place in Yahweh's court to signify His regal state and to carry out His will.

The doors of the oracle or the Holy of Holies, as it came to be known, were made of olive wood. Upon these were carved designs of cherubim, palm trees and open flowers (I Kings 6:32). It is thought that the palm tree represented the sacred tree which marked a sanctuary. Trees, in general, have a sacred tradition similar to that of pillars. In early Semitic times, trees which grew, put forth leaves, yielded fruit from the sap within them and the moisture at their roots, were thought to be abodes of a divinity.

These Temple decorations symbolize the growing and developing power of Yahweh. The pillars, as symbols of majesty and strength, represent the living but static presence of Yahweh. The palm trees represent Yahweh's sustenance, ever replenishing and renewing man's spiritual needs. Again, the cherubim, as indications of sublime worship, signify the active presence of Yahweh. The active presence is realized in the ministrings of the Temple priests. Their lives are dedicated to the task of bringing Yahweh's people into a receptive relationship with the divine presence.





### 3. The True Commandment Of The Exodus

It has been indicated that it was desired to have the Temple established according to the prophetic and priestly ideals. The Temple designs used on the walls, pillars and doors symbolize the manifestation of Yahweh in all His might, majesty and glory. The ritual of worship used in the Temple carried the aspirations of perfection still further. The Temple had to be worthy in dedication, structure and worship.

Laws relating to sacrifice may be found in the priestly book of Leviticus. Sacrifice was regarded as a divinely appointed institution (1:2). In general, sacrifice is an offering made to Yahweh with the intention of expressing, securing or promoting friendly or normal relations with Him. It is based on the fundamental assumption that the worshipper and Yahweh can enter into personal communion. It was hoped that by sacrifice this relationship would become closer and more intimate. The catalogue of priestly laws found in Leviticus gives the correct procedures to be taken. They stress the necessity of conforming to Yahweh's will, but also provide special sacrifices for repentant sinners and those who sin through ignorance (4:27f). Sacrifice had a very prominent place in the Temple worship. It must be realized, however, that its ritual had been reformed as advocated by the prophets (Deut. 12:6f). The Temple was the only place where sacrifices were to be offered unto Yahweh. The ritual was under the strict supervision of the priesthood.

Psalms 50 deals with true sacrifice and worship. It draws attention to the vital need of associating morals with the Temple ritual. The sacrifice of animals is not condemned nor even slighted. It is the conduct of



some sacrifices which are condemned as being unworthy of presentation to Yahweh. As such they were unworthy of the spiritual worship which ought to characterize the true Israel. The Psalmist displays a fervor and power, characteristic of a prophet of Yahweh. He insists that the moral and spiritual significance of worship must be in accordance with the character of Israel's holy God. This involves the absolute necessity of ordering the life and conduct of the worshippers in keeping with the high ideals. The objects offered for sacrifice were to be the best in the possession of the worshipper. All vows made to Yahweh were to be fulfilled.

It is significant to notice that not only was the appearance of Yahweh thought to dwell in the Temple but also His voice. This information is gained from the Book of Ezekiel (43:1-9). In Chapters 41 and 42 the building is described. Everything is then in readiness for the consecration of the Temple. Ezekiel describes how he had seen Yahweh abandon His sanctuary<sup>9</sup> (10:19; 11:23). Now he envisions the return of the God of Israel to dwell in the Temple (v.1-5). However, he not only sees the divine Glory, he also hears the divine voice. Yahweh announces that once more the Temple has become His dwelling place. The voice prescribes special conditions. The holiness of the divine name must never again be defiled. The people are to be instructed to keep Yahweh's commands. The presence of Yahweh's voice will be a constant reminder of the obedience which He demands. Sublime worship insists that the Children of Israel conform to Yahweh's will, requiring obedience and not mere sacrifice.

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<sup>9</sup> The departure and return of the Glory will be described fully on Pages 36-37.





It can be shown that sacrifice is not of primary importance to Yahweh. Saul learned this, much to his sorrow. This first king of the Israelites waged a successful war against the Amalekites. The prophet Samuel had warned Saul that this nation was to be put under the ban (I Sam. 15:3). Accordingly all the inhabitants and domestic animals were supposed to have been destroyed completely. Saul saved the best of the sheep and oxen, claiming that these would be sacrificed to Yahweh (15:21). Samuel's reply indicates the subordinate significance that was attributed to sacrifice. "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?" (v.22). Saul's punishment for disregarding Yahweh's command was his rejection as king of Israel.

The Children of Israel had been urged to obey the commandments of Yahweh from early times. Their God had inflicted many plagues upon the Egyptians, when the Pharaoh refused to allow them to leave his realm in a peaceable manner (Ex. 8:8, 24; 9:23; 10:13). When the Israelites had escaped from Egypt, Yahweh provided water to quench their parching thirst (15:25). At the same time Moses assures them that Yahweh will not suffer them to endure any plagues, such as the Egyptians had experienced. In addition, he insisted that the Israelites must heed the voice of Yahweh and obey His commands (15:26). Yahweh promised to give protection and sustenance to His people but in return He demanded a righteous conduct on their part. These were the terms of His royal covenant made at Mount Sinai.

The great prophets of Israel were concerned about the abuses of sacrifice. In many cases the worship of Yahweh became an external display. The condition of obedience was ignored. Moreover, sacrifices were offered





to pagan gods when the Israelites were settled in Canaan (Amos 2:8). Their idolatry even led them to offer human sacrifices (Jer. 7:31). Jeremiah emphasizes Yahweh's demands for obedience. He states his case in vehement fashion, pronouncing Yahweh's displeasure, "For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people:" (7:22, 23). Hosea voices his opposition in a softer, but nevertheless emphatic tone. He states that Yahweh really wants love from His people and not sacrifice. He desires divine knowledge more than burnt offerings (Hos. 6:6). Micah makes a classic disclosure concerning true religion," and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (6:8)<sup>10</sup>.

Sacrifice was an important accessory of the religion of Israel. Chapter 12 of the Book of Deuteronomy upholds its institution and usage. Here the ritual has been reformed of its pagan practices, including the abolition of human sacrifice. It is the attitude towards sacrifice that must be elevated. This must be in harmony with Micah's proclamation. Sacrifice, as an integral part of sublime worship, must be an act of humble service in response to the commands of Yahweh.

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<sup>10</sup> Micah's plight is more clearly seen in the following selection from the preceding passage; "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, .....? ..... shall I give my firstborn for my transgression.....? He has shewed thee, O man, what is good;" (v.6-8a).



### CHAPTER III

#### SYMBOLS OF GOD'S PROTECTING PRESENCE

##### 1. The Glory And The Name

The Psalms provide the most illuminating illustrations of Yahweh's glory. In Psalm 19 the glory of Yahweh is His manifested excellence, "The heavens declare the glory of God" (v.1). The glory as external splendor is seen elsewhere, in the description of a storm (29:3) and in the ocean tempests (93:4). On other occasions the glory is Yahweh's demonstrated power. Psalm 66 is a hymn of thanksgiving for divine deliverance. Yahweh had released the Israelites from the hands of their enemies. He has revealed His divine power. In Psalm 96 Yahweh's glory is associated with His power and also with His authority over all of the nations.

The glory of Yahweh has physical accompaniments. In the Book of Ezekiel these have definite shape and color, but can only be seen by the prophet. In his inaugural vision, Ezekiel sees the mysterious throne car (1:1-19). Above the creatures and the chariot Ezekiel sees something else, "And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone:" (1:26). Ezekiel cannot describe this part of his vision in detail. He can make out only appearances.

The glory of Yahweh was thought to dwell upon Mount Sinai. Yahweh called to Moses from the midst of a cloud which shrouded His presence. On this occasion those present experienced the glory, "And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire" (Ex. 24:17). The glory also manifested itself in the Tent of Meeting, where the Ark of the Covenant was





housed (Ex. 40:34f).

The glory is identified with the presence of Yahweh. This is demonstrated to Moses while the Israelites were still in the vicinity of Mount Sinai. Moses asks Yahweh to show him His glory (Ex. 33:18). The writer describes Yahweh's fulfilment of this request. He has His goodness pass before His faithful servant. Neither Moses nor any human can see Yahweh. Rather, the activity of Yahweh, in all its perfect righteousness, is revealed to Moses.

The Psalmist calls upon Yahweh to save him by His name (54:1). Here Yahweh's name stands for His whole manifested character. The Psalmist confidently rests his plea on the divine nature and divine strength as revealed in history. Yahweh's name is the sum of His revealed attributes of majesty, power and salvation.

Solomon's stated purpose for building the Temple is to provide "an house for the name of the Lord" (II Chron. 2:1; I Kings 5:5). That the Deuteronomic writers supported this association of Yahweh's name is seen in Solomon's Prayer of Dedication (I Kings 8:29). This association is also upheld in an older passage (Ex. 20:24) and in the Book of Deuteronomy itself (12:5, 11; 14:23f; 16:2, 6, 11; 26:2). Also from Solomon's dedicatory prayer, it is seen that prayer can be made towards the Temple in God's name (I Kings 8:35). This is possible because the divine sanctuary is called by God's name (v. 43, 48). Ezekiel carries this idea even further to include Jerusalem itself, "and the name of the city ... shall be, The Lord is there." (48:35).

By this treatment of the glory and the name it is intended to show how the Temple is conceived as being Yahweh's dwelling place. The Israelites





did not think that Yahweh, Himself, could be confined to an earthly abode. However, they felt that He had particularly revealed His divine manifestations in Zion. Thus, what they could hope for was that His glory or divine presence and His name would dwell in His chosen sanctuary. Yahweh's resident glory and name were indications of His protecting presence.

## 2. The Temple Stream And The Ark Of The Covenant

In the arid country of Palestine, water is indeed a precious thing. Water has been sanctified from earliest times. Twice in the Book of Isaiah, the presence of Yahweh is compared to a river. In Chapter 8, Yahweh's power is likened unto "the waters of Shiloah that go softly" (v.6). This symbolizes Yahweh's abiding presence, constantly sustaining His people. In Chapter 33, Yahweh's presence is described; "the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams" (v.21). Here Yahweh's majesty is proclaimed. The Psalmist adds to the fundamental idea contained in these passages from Isaiah. "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God" (46:4). Yahweh's presence is the joy and refreshment of His people, as well as their defense.

Whenever Jerusalem was besieged the supply of water was of primary importance. The City of David occupied the southeast corner of Jerusalem, as it had expanded in the time of the Roman conquests. Near the east wall, in the valley of the Kidron River, is an intermittent spring. This was known as Gihon, which in Hebrew means "gusher" (MT). This spring is referred to in I Kings 1:33 and II Chronicles 33:14. In later times it was called the Virgin's Fountain. It is interesting to learn that this spring was the site



of Solomon's coronation (I Kings 1:33f). It must have been a place with a special sacred tradition. A rock hewn conduit connected Gihon with the Pool of Siloam or Shiloah, which was located just outside the south wall of David's City (II Chron. 32:30). During the reign of Hezekiah (c.715-687), in anticipation of an attack from the Assyrians, the channel on the surface of the ground was stopped up. The water of Gihon was diverted by means of a subterranean conduit from the Old or Lower Pool to the New or Upper Pool. This new reservoir was constructed within the fortifications of the city (II Kings 18:17; Is. 36:2). Thus, the defenders of the city were assured of an inexhaustible supply of water.

Ezekiel, in his theoretical plans for the ideal Temple, describes a stream of water that flows from the Temple (47:1-12). The course of this stream is in a south-easterly direction towards the Dead Sea. Less than a mile and a half from the city the river becomes so wide that it cannot be forded. These waters had magical powers for they transformed the Dead Sea into a lake swarming with fish and surrounded by fruit-bearing trees. The leaves of these trees are said to have special healing properties. Moreover, the Dead Sea does not lose its salt-producing qualities. This miraculous Temple stream is purely a figment of Ezekiel's imagination. It is only by speculation that it can receive the slightest possible support. West of the Temple hill is a pool called Hammam-esh-Shif. This suggests that a stream may have originally flowed within the Temple enclosure, thus draining off the blood from the altar.

The Israelites were very conscious of the life-giving properties of water. Indeed, it symbolizes Yahweh's divine providence. The sparkling freshness of the Pool of Siloam was not only a sign of Yahweh's ever-abiding



presence but also of the vitality that He imparted to the lives of devoted worshippers. This was no stagnant pool that Ezekiel envisioned. His stream, with its restorative properties, symbolizes the miraculous power of Yahweh in restoring physical and spiritual health to the individual and renewing political control in the nation. In the thought of Ezekiel, all this beneficent activity of Yahweh was channelled out from the Temple.

The Ark of the Covenant had a continual association with the religion of Israel. Through many generations it was bound up indispensably with the political life of the nation. The Ark, as described in the Priestly Code, was an oblong box of acacia wood, two and one-half cubits long and one and one-half cubits wide and deep<sup>11</sup>. It was overlaid with gold and had a rim or molding around the top. There were golden rings at each corner, through which staves were passed when it was being carried. Covering its lid was a solid gold plate called the Mercy Seat. Two golden cherubim were placed at each end of this (Ex. 25:10-22).

Some of the names given to the Ark are significant. It was called the "ark of the covenant of the Lord" (Deut. 10:8) and the "ark of the testimony" (Ex. 25:22), because it contained the two tablets of stone. On these were engraved the words constituting the basis of the Mosaic covenant between Yahweh and His people. When Solomon placed the Ark in the Temple, it is claimed that "there was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb" (I Kings 8:9). It is not known why the writer says that the Ark contained nothing more. Perhaps there was a prevailing impression that it held something else. This statement would deny such rumors.

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<sup>11</sup> The cubit was generally taken to be the length of a man's forearm, or approximately 45.8 cm.





The Ark of the Covenant was unknown to the Israelites before they settled in Canaan. The Old Testament contains no direct information concerning its origin. The Ark, as has been shown, first made its appearance at Mount Sinai, after Moses had secured the tablets containing the sacred Law. It was built to be the receptacle for these tablets. The arrangement of the cherubim seems to indicate that they were intended to form a throne (Ex. 25:20). Further evidence is gained from verse 22, "I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony." David calls the Ark "the footstool of our God" (I Chron. 28:2). The Ark would never become an image of worship in itself. It is of necessity a vacant throne, for no man could ever see Yahweh face to face. But as a throne it is a symbol of His sovereignty.

The Israelites did use sacred chests, called ephods, in their worship of Yahweh. In I Samuel there are several instances when the ephod is used. It seems to be employed chiefly in connection with divination, especially for ascertaining the will of Yahweh by means of sacred lot (14:18; 23:6,8; 30:7). Gideon made an ephod for his people, although it is not described in detail (Judg. 8:27). This became an object of worship and therefore was an abomination to Yahweh. Since Exodus is a much later writing than the Book of Judges, it may be that the idea of the Ark came from the practice of using the ephod chest. Perhaps it was intended that the Ark should supersede the ephod. The Ark was symbolic of the divine presence. As such it never would have become the object of idolatrous worship. Since the Ark contained the articles of Yahweh's covenant, divination was no longer necessary. Yahweh's commandments made known His will.



The Ark of the Covenant was housed in the Tabernacle Tent (Ex. 40:21) at Mount Sinai. The tribe of Levi was commissioned to guard and transport the Ark (Num. 3:31). When the Israelites departed from Sinai, they carried the Ark, the Tent and all of its contents with them (Num. 10:33). The Ark travelled in the vanguard, indicating that Yahweh was leading His people safely through the wilderness. When the Children of Israel reached Canaan, Joshua had become their leader. The Levites, bearing the Ark, were the first ones to approach the Jordan River (Josh. 3:6). Joshua received divine instructions that the Levites were to stand in the midst of the river (3:8), while the rest of the people crossed over. The scriptural account tells us that the water was at a high level in this time of the harvest. When the priests entered the river, the waters were held back so that the Israelites crossed over on dry ground (3:15-17). Joshua made his first camp at Gilgal and placed the Ark there (4:19). The Ark played a part in the sensational destruction of the walls of Jericho, when Joshua besieged that city. The priests carried the Ark around the city once each day for six days and seven times on the seventh day. On this last day, the walls collapsed at the sound of the trumpets and the shouting of the people (6:2-20). Joshua brought the Ark to rest at Shiloh, after this victory and set up the Tabernacle there (18:1). The Israelites were now well established in Canaan, although they had not yet conquered all of the land.

After Samuel had become a prophet of Yahweh, the Israelites were threatened by the Philistines. Samuel roused his people to fight their enemy and had the Ark accompany them into battle (I Sam. 4:1-4). The Israelites believed that the presence of the Ark would assure them of victory. However, they were defeated and the Philistines captured the





Ark. The new owners found that it was disastrous for them to keep the Ark in any of their cities. Its presence cast the spell of death on many Philistines. It was placed in the country side, where it remained for seven months (5:3-6:1). The Philistines constructed a special cart for the Ark and took it to the district of Bethshemesh (6:12). They placed trespass offerings of gold and jewels on the cart. These were given with the hope of appeasing Yahweh for the afflictions suffered when the Ark had rested in a city. The Ark did not tarry here. When the Bethshemites examined the inside of the Ark, many of their tribe were killed (6:19). The Ark finally came to rest at Kirjath-jearim and remained there as long as it was in the possession of the Philistines (7:1).

David finally recaptured the Ark from the Philistines when he had defeated this powerful enemy. He went to Kirjath-jearim, to the house of Abinadab, who had kept the Ark for twenty years (I Sam. 7:2). A new cart was built and the sons of Abinadab, Uzzah and Ahio, drove the oxen which pulled it. On the way to Jerusalem, a curious thing happened. Uzzah put his hand on the Ark to steady it and was immediately struck dead (II Sam. 6:2-6; I Chron. 13:6-10). David, in fear of the mysterious power of the Ark, left it at the home of Obedom, the Gittite (II Sam. 6:10; I Chron. 13:13). It remained here for three months. Finally, the Ark was placed in the City of David. During David's reign it remained in the Tabernacle Tent (II Sam. 6:17).

Before Solomon dedicated the Temple, he had the Ark placed in its special chamber in Yahweh's house (I Kings 8:1ff; II Chron. 5:2ff). This chamber lay at the far end of the Temple and was called the Most Holy Place (I Kings 8:6). After Solomon's reign the history of the Ark mainly remains





a mystery. There is no mention of it between the reigns of Solomon and Josiah, a span of some three hundred years. Josiah is reported to have restored the Ark to the Temple (II Chron. 35:3). It is not known what happened to the Ark prior to this, nor after this solitary mention following Solomon's reign.

The prophet Jeremiah has cause to refer to the final removal of the Ark. This prophet of doom says that Yahweh will show His displeasure of His people's sinful ways in a punitive manner. "The Ark of the covenant of the Lord; neither shall it come to mind; neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it;" (Jer. 3:16). Jeremiah's prophecy was fulfilled in that neither in Ezekiel's plans nor in Zerubbabel's construction of the second Temple, is the Ark mentioned.

This rather lengthy outline of the history of the Ark of the Covenant is necessary in order to appreciate its full significance. In the time of Moses, the Ark symbolized Yahweh's sovereignty. But Yahweh was a ruler and leader whose divine presence hovered over His people. The Ark, symbolizing His protective presence is carried before the people in their march upon Canaan. When the Israelites disobeyed Yahweh's commandments, their sacred Ark was taken from them. It was not restored until David, Yahweh's anointed servant, had subdued the enemies of Israel. Underlying these manifestations of Yahweh's sovereignty are two features which show the evolutionary trend in the religion of Israel. First, the Ark retained some of the ancient thought of divination. In the days of the great patriarchs or judges, the tribe of Benjamin was rejected by the remaining tribes of Israel. When the Israelites were defeated in battle by the Benjamites, they went to the house of Yahweh, at Shiloh, to inquire of Him whether or



not they should fight the Benjamites again (Judg. 20:27f). This practice is characteristic of divination as it was used in earlier times, to seek Yahweh's will. However, it will be remembered that Samuel did not employ this method when the Israelites set forth to fight the Philistines. Secondly, the Ark seemed to possess a mysterious power within itself. Uzzah was struck dead when he touched the Ark. David would not remove this sacred chest until he felt assured that Yahweh's wrath had subsided. At the end of three months he saw that Obededom had enjoyed an amazing prosperity because of the Ark's presence in his house (II Sam. 6:11). Then David had it brought to his city. The conception of a diety residing in a sacred object seems to have lingered on. Whether or not the incident concerning Uzzah is accepted as fact is not important. It is worth noting the sacrosanct character that was attributed to the Ark. The holiness of the Ark was considered to be contagious. As such, it was a source of danger and even of death to ordinary and unsanctified persons. A person, object or place had to be sanctified for sacred use. The presence of the Ark contributed a special sense of sacredness to the Temple. It heightened the reverence in the worship of Yahweh.



### 3. The Temple Is No Guarantee Of Security

The prophet Jeremiah did not agree with his predecessor Isaiah, of Jerusalem, that the Temple was inviolate. He warned the people of Israel's northern kingdom of Judah that if they did not change their ways, Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed. Jeremiah believed that Judah was suffering at the hands of the Babylonians because they had disobeyed God's will. The people believed that their possession of the Temple, Yahweh's dwelling place, was a guarantee of their ultimate security. Jeremiah vehemently denies such a notion, claiming all speeches about it to be lies (Jer. 7:4). His words clearly present his courageous prophecies which he maintained even though the Babylonians were storming the gates of Jerusalem. "And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the Lord, ..... but ye heard not; ..... Therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, ..... and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh" (7:13, 14). Yahweh could not be confined to His earthly dwelling place. His protecting presence remained only so long as His people obeyed His will. Jeremiah's prophecy did come true. Jerusalem and the Temple were completely destroyed.

Ezekiel was exiled into Babylon along with many other of his countrymen. In a vision he saw how the glory of Yahweh left Jerusalem (11:22ff). Before Yahweh's holy sanctuary could be demolished, His divine presence had to depart from Zion. This visionary prophet held the general conception that Yahweh did manifest Himself in His chosen city. Yahweh's punishment includes the withdrawal of His protecting presence. This same idealist visualizes the return of Yahweh's glory when the Temple has been reconstructed (43:1-4). The return of the glory is manifested by thunder and





lightning, symbolizing Yahweh's majestic power that illumines the life of mankind. Although Ezekiel's plans are entirely theoretical, Yahweh's presence did return to Jerusalem. Darius, the Assyrian king, who permitted the Israelites to return to Jerusalem, sanctioned the rebuilding of the Temple (Ezra 6:7). Under the direction of Zerubbabel, the Temple was rebuilt. It was dedicated with sacrificial offerings. The people knew that indeed it was their God who had thus made them joyful (6:22). Yahweh's protecting presence had enabled them to reconstruct His sanctuary, in spite of opposition from neighboring nations. His presence continued to dwell with them when the fortifications of the city were later restored under the prophet Nehemiah.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE TEMPLE AS THE THRESHING FLOOR OF GOD

#### 1. Threshing As An Agricultural Metaphor

Harvest time in Palestine comes in the dry season. The grain can be threshed in the open air. The threshing floor was usually a permanent spot located on a mountain or hill, where the winds could be most readily utilized. The threshing was done by cattle treading knee deep over the sheaves of grain or by having a heavy sled or a roller drawn over the sheaves. The sled was probably made like those in use in this ancient land today which consist of two planks joined together. On the underside were set stones or knives or rollers.

The act of threshing was used to give a vivid illustration of the annihilation of a nation by an enemy. In such instances, the sled of destruction had completely crushed lives and property. This metaphor is used to describe Syria's oppression of Israel during the reign of Joahaz (c.815-801). "For the king of Syria had destroyed them, and made them like the dust by threshing" (II Kings 13:7). The prophet Amos announces that Yahweh's wrath will consume the Syrians "because they have threshed Gilead<sup>12</sup> with threshing instruments of iron:" (Amos 1:3).

Jeremiah uses this metaphor in prophecying Yahweh's severe judgment against Babylon. "The daughter<sup>13</sup> of Babylon is like a threshing floor, it is time to thresh her" (51:33). From the verses preceding this it can be seen that Yahweh intends to punish the Syrians for attacking His people.

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<sup>12</sup> Gilead here is the district east of the Jordan River and south of the Sea of Galilee.

<sup>13</sup> The people are the grain and the city is the threshing floor.



Complete destruction will result when Babylon is made a "burnt mountain" (v.25). This will be done "because it is the vengeance of the Lord, the vengeance of his temple" (v.11). The prophet Micah foretells the conditions which will exist in the last days. Yahweh will redeem Israel from the hands of her enemies. He commands His people to "arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion" (4:13). Yahweh will again establish His sovereignty over Zion. Peace will be established again. Those nations which refuse Yahweh's judgment will be threshed to destruction.

Isaiah of Jerusalem employs the complete sequence of sowing and harvesting to illustrate Yahweh's devoted service to Israel (28:24-29). He shows how the ploughman begins by preparing the soil and finally the harvest is gathered and threshed. He explains that these operations follow one another in natural order. Also, when the seed is sown, the husbandman has the harvest in mind. The inhabitants of Jerusalem have been filled with despair at the ill fortunes which had befallen Judah at the hands of her enemies. Isaiah wants to emphasize that Yahweh's methods of judgment are exercised systematically. He sets out to illustrate his conviction. The delicate spices are not threshed with a sled but with a staff. Also, although the corn needs a roller, it is not crushed to dust. Yahweh's judgment is not executed arbitrarily but proportionate to the extent of violation. The parable concludes, "the Lord of hosts is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working" (v.29). Isaiah stresses the wisdom that Yahweh displays in offering sustenance and salvation to His people.

Isaiah of Babylon assures the exiles of Jerusalem that they are still Yahweh's people (41:8). Yahweh promises His help, "yea, I will help thee; yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (v.10).





Yahweh promises to restore Israel, to make her a new power. "Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff" (v.15). All things are possible with Yahweh's assistance.

The threshing metaphor provides several graphic illustrations of Yahweh's divine nature. It is the prophet who uses it to signify complete destruction. Captured cities had been literally threshed to dust and even ploughed under. Recent archaeological excavations have revealed that this is what happened to Shiloh, probably in the time of Samuel when the Philistines attacked it. It is not Yahweh's nature to bring about wanton destruction. However, the prophets' pleadings for a return to obedience to Yahweh's will had gone unheeded for many years. As a result, they use the most vindictive illustration to describe the wrath of their God. He will not be mocked. The prophets, then, remind the people of an important function of the Temple. It houses the Ark of the Covenant which is the guardian of the sacred tablets. These tables contain the Law of the covenant and are a constant reminder of Yahweh's judgment. Again, the threshing metaphor has a kindlier message to convey. The sequence of planting and harvesting portrays Yahweh's methodical wisdom. The help given to His people is not sporadic. Just as His justice is not at all arbitrary, so does He lead His people to a spiritual harvest. In their worship of Yahweh, in His holy Temple, the people will be led to a fuller understanding of His saving grace. They must prepare their lives through obedience and service to their God. Thus righteousness and firm convictions will be implanted. Yahweh will nurture their beliefs. There will be a rich harvest of the soul for each one who has planted with a view to fulfilling Yahweh's will.



## 2. The Fulfilment Of God's Promise

In the last section of II Samuel, there is a document which may be described as the charter of the most famous of the world's holy places (24:10-25). This concerns David's selection of an altar site at Jerusalem. This has been of importance not only to Judaism and Christianity, but Islam as well. Over the same spot today, stands the Dome of the Rock, one of the most sacred Mohammedan shrines.

David had taken a census of his kingdom (24:1-9). For some reason this is recorded as being displeasing to Yahweh. It may be that at this time it was considered a sin to know a secret which only the Creator should know. In any event, David repented of his sin. The prophet Gad announces that his king may select one of three alternate punishments (v.13). David chooses the one of least duration, a three days' pestilence in the land. Seventy thousand men throughout the kingdom perished. Finally, the hand of the destroying angel was stayed while it was at the threshing floor of Araunah, the Jebusite (v.16). At Yahweh's command David purchased this threshing floor. On this site he constructed an altar in Yahweh's name. The spot where the angel's hand was stayed was consecrated for all future ages.

The account of the census and the selection of the altar site occurs also in I Chronicles, Chapter 21. In this book, though, the altar receives its full import. "Then David said, This is the house of the Lord, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel" (22:1). It was intended that this altar should be the one used by Solomon when he built the holy Temple.



It was shown earlier that Jerusalem, Zion, was specially chosen by Yahweh. This was to be the place where His name should dwell (Deut. 12:5). There is no indication, from Scriptural records, that there had ever been a sanctuary at Jerusalem before David's time. Such places as Shiloh and Bethel had been shrines from earliest ages. They were used as sanctuaries by the Canaanites for their pagan gods. Yet there is a special significance in David's choice of a threshing floor as the location of Yahweh's altar. Since threshing floors were established on hills or mountains or on some elevated spot, they naturally acquired the sacred respect attributed to high places. More than this, in Jacob's time a threshing floor was named as a sacred spot. When Joseph died, Jacob and a great company with him went "to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond Jordan, and there they mourned with a great and very sore lamentation: and he made a mourning for his father seven days" (Gen. 50:10).

Araunah's threshing floor became a most suitable site for Yahweh's sanctuary. It commanded majestic respect from its elevated position. It solemnized Yahweh's execution of judgment when His people disobeyed His will. It commemorated Yahweh's display of mercy when the destruction of the pestilence was ended. In David's act of insisting to pay for the threshing floor (II Sam. 24:24), the rightful act of offering was inaugurated in this holy place. A rightful relationship with Yahweh was thereby established. Yahweh's dwelling place could then become the threshing floor for dedicated lives bearing rich fruits of faithful service and obedience to their God.





## CHAPTER V

### THE TEMPLE AS THE ALTAR OF THE UNIVERSE

#### 1. God The Creator

In this concluding chapter, the hub of the spiritual wheel is reached. Systematically the functions have been gathered. One by one the ideals, symbols and metaphors have been accumulated. We now converge upon that spot in the Temple where direct communion with Yahweh was thought to be established. In a wider sense the Temple itself will be seen as the altar of the universe.

The Hebrew conception of the universe, in its general outlines, was the one held by primitive Semitic peoples. Before a description is given, it must be understood that there is no single connected passage in the Old Testament which describes the cosmos as a consistent whole, or even brings together all of the fundamental conceptions. The earth is the center of the universe. It seems to be a circular disk (Is. 40:22), which rests upon unseen foundations (Job 38:6; Zec. 12:1). The firmament or sky, like a thin, solid dome<sup>14</sup>, restrains the waters above it (Gen. 1:6), except when its windows are opened to let down rain (Gen. 7:11). The firmament also rests upon mysterious foundations (II Sam. 22:8; Job 26:11). In it are fastened the luminaries, sun, moon and stars (Gen. 1:14-17), which move in their fixed courses. Sometimes a plurality of heavens is spoken of (Deut. 10:14; Ps. 148:4), in the highest of which Yahweh dwells (Deut. 26:15; II Chron. 6:21; Amos 9:6). Within the mass of the earth is the dark abode of the departed, called Sheol (Num. 16:33; Ps. 15:11; Is. 38:18). Beneath

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<sup>14</sup> cf. Job 22:14, "vault"; Prov. 8:27, "compass"; Ps. 104:9, "bounds".



the earth is the great deep (Is. 51:10), whose storehouses and fountains (Gen. 7:11) feed the seas which are around the edges of the dry land.

It can be seen, from the above references, that some of the cosmological conceptions come from poetry. Others are written in highly figurative prophecy or apocalypse. Actually the Old Testament does not describe the universe according to plan and elevation. The writers possessed no scientific instruments, but present their poetic imagery from observation and imagination. Indeed, the whole question of the original creation and present structure of the universe is frequently stated to be beyond the comprehension of human reason<sup>15</sup>.

Chapter 38 of the Book of Job describes the act of creation as the construction of a building. "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? ..... Who hath laid the measures thereof, ..... or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the cornerstone thereof?" (v.4-6). Isaiah of Babylon stated that Yahweh had formed the earth to be a dwelling place (45:18). Since the entire universe, including all animate and inanimate objects were created by Yahweh, all were manifestations of His activity. As such, Yahweh's sustaining presence can be said to dwell throughout the entire universe. Thus, in keeping with the particular concept of the Temple as the abode of His divine presence, the universe, too, can be thought of as a temple, in its widest sense. Also, Yahweh had given mankind dominion over other living creatures (Gen. 1:28). Human beings then, were to be the priests of the temple universal, ministering to all of Yahweh's creatures.

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<sup>15</sup> Jer. 31:37; Is. 40; Job 26:14; 36:29; 37:16f.



The Psalmist envisions the presence of Yahweh as permeating the entire universe. He asks that he "may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of (his) life" (Ps.27:4). Yahweh's glory is manifested in the beauty of nature. Yahweh's assurance of security will protect him always. When he wishes to praise his God with joyous sacrifice, then he will go to Yahweh's tabernacle in Zion to present his offerings.

The sovereignty of Yahweh over creation is described in graphic terms by the psalmists. The theme of Psalm 97 is Yahweh's appearance in majesty and judgment, which is a source of terror to the wicked and a solace to the righteous. In the opening verses (1-6), Yahweh's manifestation as the King, the divine ruler, is shown. He comes forth in the midst of many signs to assert His royal prerogatives. "His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw and trembled. The hills melted like wax, at the presence of the Lord" (v.4-5). The manifold display of mighty power, as seen in a gigantic storm, is taken as an illustration of Yahweh's power. The wicked are exhorted to take heed of Yahweh's display of might for "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne" (v.2). Yahweh's sovereignty is again displayed in a storm in Psalm 77:16-19. The God Who judges the conduct of men is in complete control of all of these exhibitions of terrifying power. Indeed, He is sovereign of all that He has created.

In Psalm 104, Yahweh is praised as both the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. In this Psalm, the creation of the universe is described in terms of an architectural metaphor. The earth is compared with a tent, its covering being the firmament. "Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain" (v.2)<sup>16</sup>. The figure is carried further in the next verse. "Who

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<sup>16</sup> cf. Is. 40:22.



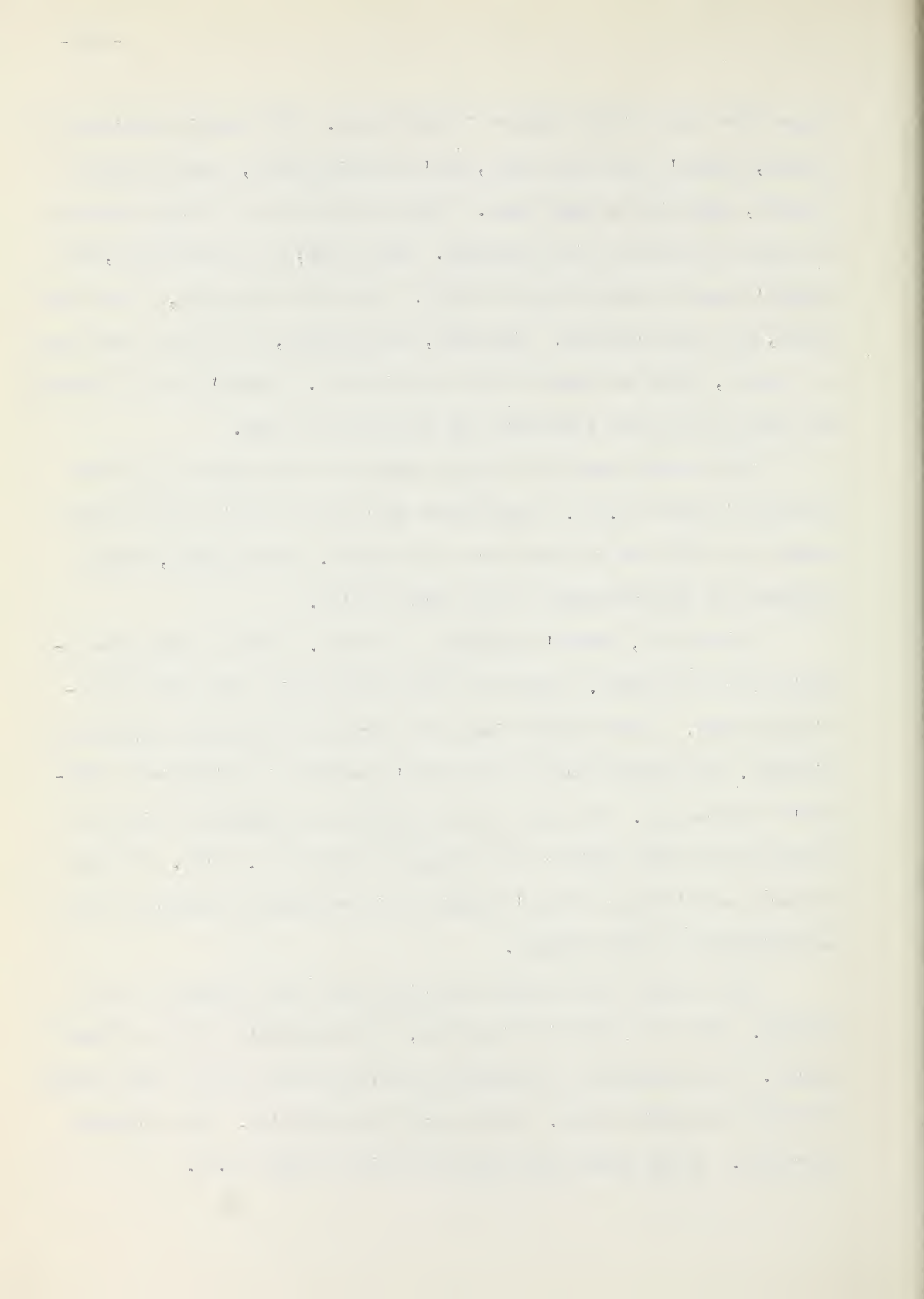


layest the beams of his chambers in the waters." The Psalmist envisions heaven, Yahweh's abode and earth, man's dwelling place, each as being a chamber, supported by huge beams. These pillars are not thought actually to hold up the dome of the firmament. They stand, in a general way, for Yahweh's means of supporting the world. The Hebrew cosmology, as has been shown, was very primitive. The skies, they thought, did require some means of support, which was beyond their comprehension. Yahweh's act of creation was thus all the more stupendous and mysterious to them.

The Psalmist goes on to praise Yahweh for the manner in which He created the earth (v.14). Yahweh made the soil so that it would produce grass for cattle and food and herbs for mankind. Consequently, Yahweh prepared for the sustenance of all forms of life.

In Psalm 48, Yahweh's greatness is lauded. Psalm 46 shows the occasion for such praise. Israel had been miraculously saved from the besieging enemy. A destructive plague had forced the attacking Assyrians to withdraw. The maintenance of the nation's security is attributed to Yahweh's intervention. His powers of destruction are compared to that of a lashing storm which shatters the strongest vessels (Ps. 48:7). No power on earth can withstand Yahweh's might in his relentless pursuance of the establishment of righteousness.

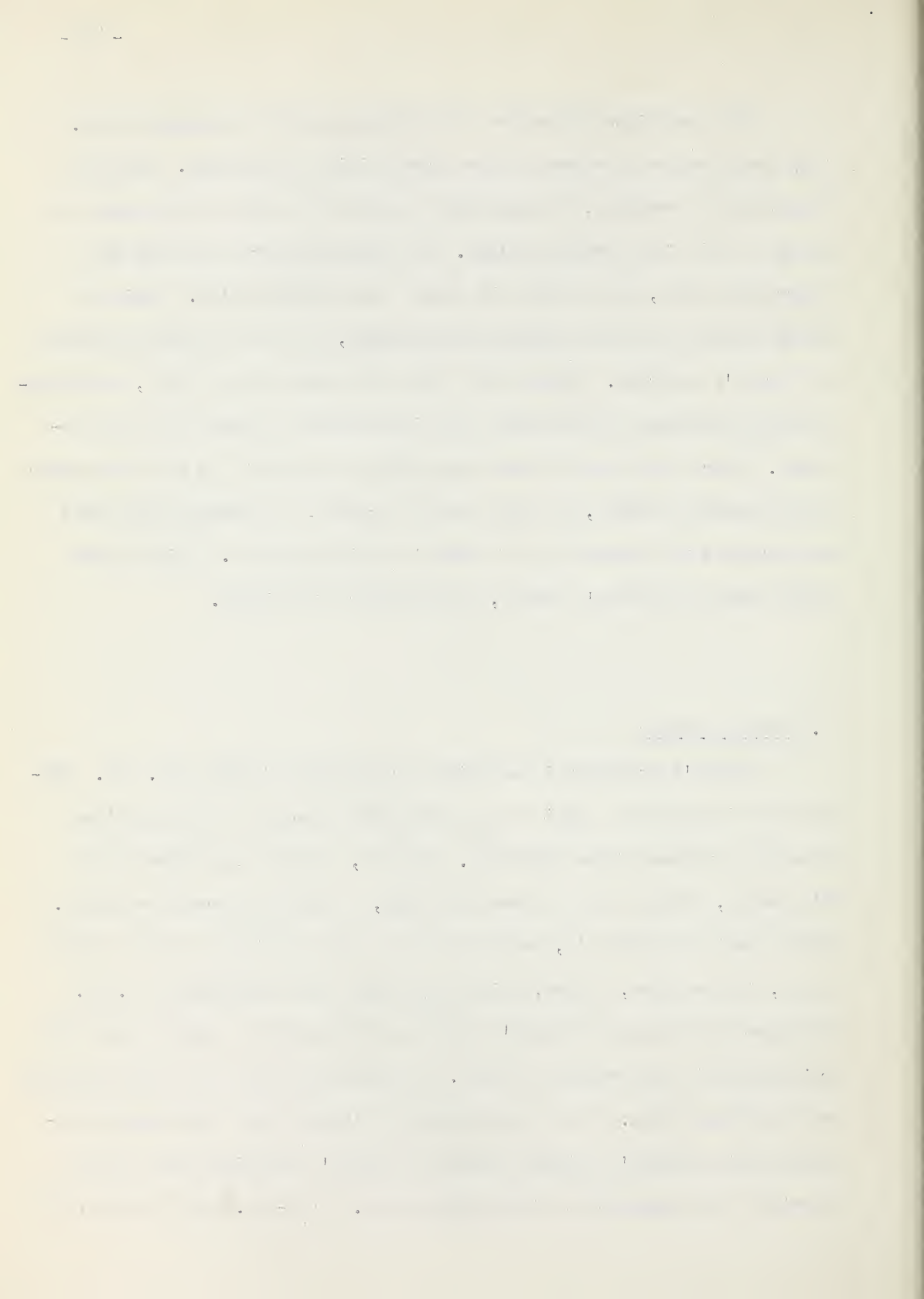
The Psalmist has selected a special place where Yahweh is to be praised. It is "in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness" (48:1). The inhabitants of Jerusalem have seen Yahweh assail their enemies with His destructive power. He had saved His holy city. Zion had been glorified. It had become "the joy of the whole earth" (v.2).



The Israelites did believe that Yahweh moved in mysterious ways. They never ceased to wonder at the incredibility of creation. Great as Yahweh was in creation, His magnitude exceeds all bounds in the mercy He shows to all of His created beings. For Yahweh supports not only the starry firmament, He sustains all animal and vegetable life. Imminent though Yahweh is in His universal sovereignty, He is the intimate guardian of Israel's security. Yahweh will guide His people for all ages, demonstrating His greatness in His desire for righteousness on the part of all nations. Where can Yahweh be most appropriately praised? In the life center of His earthly chamber, men may sing His praises. In worship and praise men conceive the magnanimity of Yahweh's loving kindness. This is most fully realized in Zion's Temple, at the altar of holiness.

## 2. The Holy Center

Yahweh's greatness is acclaimed in the Song of Moses (Ex. 15). Yahweh had displayed His might by His spectacular rescue of the Israelites from the clutches of the Egyptians. However, not only has Yahweh saved His people, He has chosen a haven for them, a dwelling place of security. "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thy hands have established" (v.17). This special display of Yahweh's power in deliverance is common ground for both prophetic and priestly writers. The priestly school saw this selection as the divine ideal. It is significant to discover that the Prophet Jeremiah retains Yahweh's original choice of Israel's dwelling place when he foretells the restoration of the nation (Jer. 31:31-40). What is more, the





boundaries are set out in a minute way. The walls of the holy city will be measured (v.39). Also in Zion there will be found the corner stone of Yahweh's earthly chamber. This will be the guarantee of security, a sure foundation (Is. 28:16). The corner stone is that large stone, in the lowest layer of stones, which binds two rows at right angles. It is Yahweh's sanctuary that binds the people with their God. Righteousness and mercy will be His portion. Obedience and service will be the obligation of the people. These will be united in Zion, Israel's dwelling place.

While a careful selection was made for Israel's dwelling place, it was still confined to time and space. Temporal man has the Temple in Zion where he seeks His God. But Yahweh dwells in heaven, His temple and His throne. His holiness and sovereignty emanate from this upper chamber. Those who trust in Yahweh look upward and envision their God sitting upon His throne. All this is proclaimed by the Psalmist (Ps. 11:4). That Yahweh dwells in His heavenly temple, maintaining His constant vigil for righteousness, is the belief of the prophet Micah (1:2). Yahweh always witnesses the behavior of all people.

The building of Solomon's Temple was undertaken with utmost skill and extravagance of materials (I Kings 5). Negotiations were made with Hiram, the king of Tyre. Solomon informed this monarch that he was under divine instruction. Yahweh had told David that his son should build the house for the divine name (v.5). Hiram respected the God of the Israelites in his amiable relationship with David and then Solomon (v.8). He was prepared to carry out Solomon's wishes.

Israel possessed no suitable timber for the construction of the Temple. Cedar and fir trees were secured by Hiram's men from Lebanon.





There is soft lime stone in the hills of Palestine which is easily quarried. It hardens on exposure to the air. The skilled craftsmen of Tyre assisted the Israelites in shaping the timbers and the stone. The manual labor was done by thousands of Israelites. Solomon spared neither cost nor man power in the construction of his elaborate Temple. The writers of I Kings indicate all this. However, they make but brief reference to the forced labor to which Solomon resorted. He was an oriental despot who gave vent to lavishness not only on Yahweh's house, but more so on his own palace (7:1-12).

A detailed description of the Temple buildings is given in I Kings, Chapter 6. The architectural completeness indicates that these plans were probably recorded by a contemporary of Solomon. The description of Ezekiel's temple, which, though only an ideal, is based largely on the plans for the first Temple.

The dimensions of the Temple are given in cubits. Since a cubit may be roughly estimated as twenty inches, the inner dimensions of the building would be approximately 100 feet by  $33 \frac{1}{3}$  by 50 (v.2). The interior consisted of two compartments, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. These were constructed in such a way as to direct attention to the most sacred chamber. There was a series of stairs which led up to the porch. The vestibule opened into the Holy Place. From this entrance one's gaze would be directed by the rectangular length of this compartment to rest on the doorway of the Holy of Holies. This chamber was a symmetrical cube, twenty cubits in dimension. It was reached by a stairway. Thus, one would look ever upward towards this sacrosanct room.

In keeping with the divine selection of Israel's dwelling place, the Temple was carefully constructed to contain Yahweh's glory. The finest mate-



rials were secured. The most skilled craftsmen were employed. Architectural perfection was used to obtain a heavenward attitude. Yahweh's holy center contained all the external inducements for a righteous approach to His throne of grace.

### 3. The Priesthood

Primitive Semitic people used the means of sacrifice to satisfy the physical needs of some particular god. The God of Israel had no deficiencies and so sacrifice had to fulfil the needs of the worshipper. As a result, cult regulations were established. These were used to consider the gracious gifts that Yahweh was continually bestowing on His people. Also, the Israelites realized that all that they could do for Yahweh was to honor Him. Someone was needed to conduct sacrifices. In nomadic times any Hebrew male could perform these duties. Usually it was the head of a family or a clan who did this.

The tribe of Levi was preferred for the duties of the priesthood. Levi was the great grandfather of Moses and Aaron (Ex. 7:16-20). The Levites, along with Aaron, received a special blessing for their loyalty to Yahweh. This event took place after Moses had made his first descent from Mount Sinai with the tablets of stone (Ex. 32:1ff). The people, fearful lest he should not return, had erected a golden calf to be their idol of worship. Moses was enraged. He sought help to avenge this idolatrous rebellion. The sons of Levi supported him with armed might and killed many of the insurgents. Their loyalty was rewarded (v.26-29). The Levites became the custodians of the Ark of the Covenant from the time that Joshua





led the Israelites into the Promised Land. Although the Levites had received this special recognition, any male Israelite could still conduct sacrifices.

During the period of the settlement, it was the custom to have a priest in charge of a sanctuary. Thus Eli and his sons were engaged with the active management of the shrine at Shiloh (I Sam. 1:3. 9). David had two chief priests in Jerusalem, Zadok and Abiathar (II Sam. 8:17), who were custodians of the Ark (15:24). Yet, David exercised a priestly prerogative when the Ark was brought to Jerusalem (II Sam. 6:13-16). He offered a sacrifice of thanksgiving. Then he donned the priestly vestment and danced ecstatically before the procession. The theocratic character of the Israelite monarchy is further revealed. Jehoash severely chastised the priests for failing to provide for the necessary repairs of the Temple (II Kings 12: 7-16). Thus we see, in effect, that the king was the head of the priesthood.

Money was collected by means of tithes and free will offerings. The priests were the Temple treasurers and were required to delegate part of the funds for these repairs.

Zadok became the high priest during Solomon's reign (I Kings 2:35). The priesthood now became a hereditary institution, descending from this priest's family. The Levites still continued to administer the country shrines until the time of Josiah. This monarch abolished all these rural sanctuaries. At the same time it had been decreed that all Levites should be priests and all priests Levites (Deut. 18:1). By these joint actions Josiah put the Levites out of a job. The problem of unemployed priests was not solved before the exile.





In post exilic times the Levites were too numerous to function as priests. They were excluded from the ordained priesthood. Ezekiel outlines their subservient duties. "They shall be ministers in my sanctuary, having charge at the gates of the house, and ministering to the house: they shall slay the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister unto them" (44:11). The functions assigned to the priests, the sons of Zadok, are also set forth (44:15-31). They alone were permitted to enter the Temple and minister at the altar. They were required to teach the people the difference between the clean and the unclean. They were to be the judges of the people and they themselves were to obey all the commands of Yahweh.

Joshua was the head of the body of priests who returned with the first exiles. He is accorded a very high place by the prophets Haggai (1:1,12f) and Zechariah (3:1f). As the representative of his people Joshua also received the announcement of the coming of the Messiah (Zec. 3:1-8). Zerubabel was appointed governor of the returning exiles by Darius, the Persian king (Hag. 1:1). However, Joshua shared with him the exercise of authority over a restored Jerusalem.

The priesthood grew out of man's desire to glorify God. In their nomadic days the Israelites had a tightly knit tribal society which excluded all strangers. Then any male member could offer sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise. When the Israelites settled in Canaan there was a real danger of the infiltration of pagan practices. Thus the regulations of the cult were more rigidly enforced. Officials were needed to administer the activities of Yahweh's sanctuaries. The kings of Israel maintained final control of the sanctuaries and the Temple. However, in post exilic times



the survival of Judaism depended upon a zealous preservation of the religious cult. The importance of the chief priest rose to that of recognized civil authority. The Temple had become the center of religious and political control.

#### 4. Sacrifice And Offering

In Chapter II the full connotation of sacrifice and offering was given. Now the categories of offering will be listed. It is important to know the significance of the several types of offering. From them we shall learn why the Israelites felt it necessary to worship Yahweh at one sacred altar.

The burnt offering<sup>17</sup> was the most general of all sacrifices. It was the oldest form of sacrifice and was more generally practiced by Semitic peoples than other forms. The sacrificial victim was usually a male animal taken from a herd or flock. Sometimes birds were used. As a rule, the burnt offering accompanied the morning and evening worship of the people. It characterized occasions of great importance. Adoration is the significance of this continual type of offering. It is expressive of a normal or ideal relationship to Yahweh.

The sin offering<sup>18</sup> was propitiatory in its character. The victim varied according to the person or persons on whose behalf it was offered: (a) for a ruler, the victim was a male goat; (b) for an ordinary person it was a female goat, a ewe lamb, a turtle dove or a young pigeon, or even a meal offering; (c) for a priest or Levite at the time of installation (Num. 8:8) and (d) for the whole congregation, it was a bullock or a male

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<sup>17</sup> Lev. 8:6f; Ex. 29:38-42; Num. 28:3f.      <sup>18</sup> Lev. 4:1ff; 8:14; Num. 15:24.



goat. (e) On the Day of Atonement<sup>19</sup>, a bullock was offered for the high priest and two male goats for the people. The design of the sin offering was the covering or removal of minor sins<sup>20</sup> and repented sins.

The guilt or trespass offering (Lev. 5; 7:1-10) was like the sin offering in its general meaning and nature. It had a more specific use for an unwitting transgression of the ordinances of Yahweh in respect of holy things or of the rights of property (Lev. 6:1ff). The sacrifice consisted of the offering of a ram, supplemented by the addition of a fine or pecuniary compensation, in case of damage done to one's neighbor. The amount of reparation was computed according to the loss in value sustained by the injured party, plus one-fifth for the priest.

The peace offering (Lev. 3; 7:11f) expressed general friendly relations with Yahweh. It was not merely the restoration of a disrupted peace, however. There were three varieties of this type: (a) the thank offering; (b) the vow offering; (c) the free will offering. In all of these, Yahweh is recognized as the bestower of blessing. In the first, the blessing is a thing of the past and the sacrifice signifies its acceptance. In the second, the blessing is looked upon as still in the future. It is greatly desired by the worshipper who makes his offering as an expression of loyalty and a condition for the bestowment of the blessing. In the third, the function of the offering was auxiliary to the prayer rather than a condition for the reception of the blessing. Victims for the peace offering could be either male or female from a herd or flock, but had to be without blemish.

The terms "wave offering" (Lev. 7:30) and "heave offering" (v.14)

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<sup>19</sup> Lev. 16:16, 24, 29; Ex. 30:10--a yearly festival when atonement was made for the sins of all the people. Ezek. 45:18--here it is stated that it should be observed twice a year.

<sup>20</sup> Sins of ignorance, Lev. 4; Num. 15.





were applied to the portion of the sacrificial victim that the priests received. The former denotes a peculiar ceremony consisting in holding the right shoulder of the victim horizontally and moving it forward towards the altar. This signified that this portion belonged to Yahweh but was given back to the priests by Him. The latter signifies the moving of the breast of the animal upward and then downward in token of presenting it to Yahweh as His and receiving it again as a gift from Him.

The "meal offering" (Lev. 2) and "shewbread" (Lev. 24:5f; Ex. 25:30) were the main vegetable offerings. The meal offering consisted of unbaked fine flour, baked cakes or loaves or parched ears of corn. This offering usually accompanied a peace or burnt offering, neither of which was complete without it (Num. 15; 28; 29). Sometimes it was presented as a complete offering due to the poverty of the worshipper. Also, a special variety was the oblation prescribed for cases in which a husband, suspicious of his wife's fidelity, brought her to the priest with "the tenth part of an ephah of barley meal." A handful of this was then burned upon the altar, while, through an elaborate ritual, including the use of holy water, the wife was given an opportunity of swearing to her innocence and presumably proving it (Num. 5:14-31).

The showbread consisted of twelve loaves of unleavened bread. These were placed upon a table in the Holy Place. They remained here for a whole week so that they could be sanctified and purified. Thus the showbread signified that Yahweh was the source and origin of the nourishment that sustains and strengthens the worshipper.

During the reign of Ahab, the prophet Elijah vindicated the divinity of Yahweh in a dramatic fashion (I Kings 18:20-40). On this occasion he



stands alone against four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal. Each side prepares a bullock for sacrifice, but neither sets fire to the wood underneath the victim. After the pagan prophets have failed to call forth their god, Elijah calls on Yahweh. "Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice" (v.38). The spectators were shown that Yahweh was their God. Also, we see here a sign of Yahweh's acceptance<sup>21</sup>. He who had offered sacrifice was himself dedicated to obedience and service towards Yahweh.

It was generally believed that offerings sacrificed to Yahweh were accepted as a pledge of the worshipper's faithfulness. Abel offered "the firstlings of his flock" (Gen. 4:4) to Yahweh "and the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering." Cain was "a tiller of the ground" (v.2). He offered fruit from his crop to Yahweh, but it was not accepted (v.5). The reason why Cain's offering was rejected was due to some defect in his character. He was not worthy of personal respect.

Amos presents a prophetic view of sacrifice (5:21-27). Here he goes through the entire ritual of sacrifice, including all types of offering and even music. Amos denounces the idolatrous usage of these forms of worship. He points out that true sacrifice is not possible without justice and righteousness. All worshippers must make moral preparations in their own lives before they can have true sacrifice. Since the Israelites had disregarded the righteous attitude towards sacrifices, Amos would do away with them all.

The burnt offering was the most significant means of expiation. Its main use was for the glorification of Yahweh. Other types varied in importance from the removal of minor sins to the atonement for all iniquities committed by the people. The peace offerings were used to invoke Yahweh's

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<sup>21</sup> cf. Lev. 9:24; Judg. 6:21.



blessings or to express gratitude for His beneficence. The showbread offering recognized Yahweh's sustenance of His people. The sacrificial ritual provided all the mechanics for approaching Yahweh with praise and petitions. However, the profuseness of regulations seems to make the ritual unwieldy. It is not difficult to understand why Amos is so critical of the abuses. The rigid adherence to technicalities had buried the sacred purposes. Yet provision had been made for the most sacred consideration of sacrifices. It was decreed that the Day of Atonement should be followed by "a sabbath of rest" (Lev. 16:31). This yearly festival for making propitiation of the sins of all the nation was thus to be consecrated by every individual. Sacrifice to be true sacrifice had to be an act of service and of consecration in response to the command of Yahweh.

It is interesting to note that the meal offering was a means of trial. The Temple had legal significance for the people, in this respect. How much better it would have been if all worshippers had possessed a conscious sense of divine judgment as they stood before the Temple. Then the dramatic sense of Yahweh's approval of sacrifice would have had a personal meaning. Before His altar they would have been purged by His searing spirit and their lives would have been rekindled to righteous conduct and service.





## 5. The Significance Of Altars

Since the sacrificial ritual is such an essential part of worship in the religion of Israel, altars came to be of utmost importance. Even these sacred objects went through an evolutionary development. Originally, sacrifices were set upon the ground before the divinity or upon some object in which it was believed to dwell. Then there emerged the concept of the sacrifice as a meal, which was either exclusively for the divinity or shared with the worshippers. With the development of the idol concept, natural objects, such as poles and stones, were placed before the idol where the deity was thought to be present. Sometimes a thin substance was spread on the ground to remove the idol from direct human contact. When the first shrines were built they were small in size. As a result, the altar was placed outside. When shrines were enlarged, the altar was moved inside and placed before the idol. With the development of art, the altars varied in form and were ornamented.

While this process aptly illustrates the evolution of altars, the Israelites provided their own sacred connotations. It was characteristic of the Hebrew genius to adopt pagan practices and give them special meanings worthy of attribution to Yahweh. The way in which a sacred stone came to be regarded as an altar is seen in an event that occurred during Saul's reign (I Sam. 14:31-35). The Israelites were drawn up to fight the Philistines, when the enemy broke camp and fled (v.16-23). Saul received news that many of the people were slaying animals that had been captured and were eating them without a proper sacrificial disposal of the blood. He had a large stone placed before him, to which the people were ordered to



bring their animals for slaughter. This rock was both a sacred stone, set up in commemoration of Yahweh's deliverance of His people and also an altar. The main idea regarding the sacred stone was that it indicated the nearby presence of deity<sup>22</sup>. With regard to the altar, it was the place of sacrifice, since every slaughter was considered to be a sacrifice. This was due to the fact that blood was shed. These two ideas were brought together in the Old Testament in places wherever Yahweh manifested His presence (cf. Ex. 20:24; Deut. 12:5).

The importance of the altar is seen when the exiled Israelites returned to Jerusalem. Before they had begun to rebuild the Temple, they erected an altar (Ezra 3:1-6). It was necessary to regulate their daily activities by establishing the sacrificial ritual.

The ritual of sacrifice is set forth in minute detail in Chapter I of the Book of Leviticus. Here instructions are given to the priests, Aaron's sons (Lev. 8:10). The burnt offering involved first the laying on of the hands of the offerer. Next the victim was slaughtered at the door of the sanctuary, to the north of the altar. Then came the flaying and cutting of the body. The entrails and legs were washed. Finally there was the sprinkling of blood and the burning of the whole victim on the altar. The laying on of hands was commonly used to signify the self identification of the person that performed the act with the one on whom the hands were laid. In the offering up of sacrifices, the worshipper indicated his willingness to be considered one with the victim by placing his hand on its head. The northern regions were the most unknown and full of mystery in the thoughts of all Semitic people. This may explain the explicit instruction



for the slaughtering of the victim to the north of the altar. The killing of the victim is generally held to be the primary sacrificial act. There is no evidence in the Scriptures to show that it was at first, or during the Old Testament period, regarded as anything more than a means of securing the blood. The general notion was that the life principle either is the blood itself or has its residence in the blood (Lev. 17:11). As was shown in the reference to Saul, blood was not to be made an article of food (cf. Lev. 7:26). Recognition of the presence of deity was made by sprinkling blood on the altar. This could also be done with oil. This was done in token of the offering of the life of the victim and of the atonement or expiation of sin thereby (Lev. 3:2; 16:14). The act of burning was probably the very way in which the connection of the sacrificed animal with Yahweh was symbolized. With the complete destruction of the sacrifice, accompanied by the ascending smoke, it was a sign that the offering had gone to Yahweh.

The horns of the altar were regarded as necessary adornments at the time of building the first Temple (I Kings 12:28). The oldest altars, simply built of unhewn stone, did not seem to possess these horns (cf. Ex. 20:25). Although it was customary for the elaborate altars to have horns, their original significance is not known. The pointed shape of horns made them the emblem of a peak. As such they would be symbolic of the reverence attributed to high places. Horns were also considered to be emblems of power, since animals used them as weapons (I Kings 22:11). Also, animals raised their horns as a sign of victory and strength (cf. Ps. 75:10). It is known that the horns were regarded to be a very sacred part of an altar. The ritual of the burnt offering contains this instruction, "And thou shalt





take of the blood of the bullock, and put it upon the horns of the altar" (Ex. 29:12). Somehow these parts of the altar became recognized as a place of asylum. Adonijah, one of David's sons, sought to gain enough support so as to be able to succeed his father. But David had promised to appoint Solomon as his successor. When Solomon received official recognition, Adonijah, in fear, "went and caught hold on the horns of the altar" (I Kings 1:50). Thus they symbolized Yahweh's protecting presence and indicated a development of the conception of the Temple as an assurance of national security.

Ezekiel describes the consecration of the altar in his characteristically meticulous fashion (43:18-27). The altar is dedicated by applying the blood of the sin offering. By this means the inherent "sinfulness" of material things is expiated and removed<sup>23</sup>. The rite is to last for seven days. Thus the hallowing of the altar begins with the rite of purification. It was believed that sin could affect even material things. As a result, these iniquities had to be removed before any object or person could be dedicated to Yahweh. The blood, which is regarded as containing the principle of life, is sprinkled on the prominent parts of the altar in order to communicate holiness. At the same time, the application was intended to purify and purge the altar from this inherent sinfulness. The purpose of the rite in Ezekiel is to remove contamination from that which is already holy. Thus, a two-fold intention may be said to determine the act, the imparting of holiness and the removal of sin. Although this act is not included in the account of the dedication of Solomon's Temple, it can be

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<sup>23</sup> The altar needs atonement as having been previously profane. It is now made holy, that is, placed in the category of things which have a special relation to the diety. The sin has nothing to do with moral misdeeds.



seen that it is applicable for the consecration of the Temple itself.

Solomon's Temple contained one altar and the table for the showbread. The altar of incense was not known until post exilic times<sup>24</sup>. In the second Temple it and the table were placed just outside the Holy of Holies. When the Ark of the Covenant was housed in the Tent, it is reported that a veil separated it from the altar of incense (Ex. 30:6). The specific location of the showbread table must be assumed from a scriptural reference. "And thou shalt set upon the table shewbread before me alway" (Ex. 25:30). Since the Holy of Holies can contain nothing except the Ark, the table for the showbread would be placed just outside this chamber. The altar of burnt offering was located in the Holy Place. It is described both in II Chronicles 4:1 and in Ezekiel 43:13-17. Ezekiel's altar was made of four square stones, set one upon another, decreasing in extent and increasing in thickness. The altar was ascended by a flight of steps on its east side.

The great altar would convey all the significance involved in sacrificial offerings. The showbread, as has been stated, signified Yahweh's ceaseless sustenance. The significance of the burning of incense was that of prayer, rising ever upward. The importance of approaching the great altar from the east is realized from the general concept regarding this quarter. Hebrews, as well as other Orientals, considered the east to be the determining point of the compass. This was probably due to the fact that it was the place of the sunrising. How appropriate it was to go up to Yahweh to seek the light of His countenance in a devoted attitude to worship!

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<sup>24</sup> The altar of incense was not mentioned by Ezekiel. It appears in late Priestly writings. The antiquity of the showbread table is known from its mention in I Sam. 21:4ff.



The sacrificial ritual was the means that the Israelites used to seek communion with their God. They sought every means to remove the barriers of sin, which might keep them from drawing near to His divine presence. They were guided in their ceremonies by the meticulous priests. They were cautioned in their conduct by the zealous prophets. With utmost care they embodied their knowledge of God in the construction of the Temple and in the location of their altars. Thus, they sought to represent in Zion what Yahweh had created in His universe. Their Creator had fashioned a chamber. They, too, erected one. Their Sovereign Lord demanded obedience to His divine laws. Their response was to design the Temple as the altar of the universe. The house of Yahweh symbolized true sacrifice. In content and use it was their act of service in response to the command of their God.





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